

LET'S Talk

SUMMER 2003

HEALTHY BODIES • SOUND MINDS • A SAFE PLACE TO WORK

WE ALL EXPERIENCE VARIATIONS IN OUR MOOD —

sadness, the blues or the normal grief that accompanies the loss of someone you love. However, severe or prolonged depression that interferes with your ability to function, feel pleasure or maintain interest in daily activities is not a mere case of the blues.

Are you feeling any of these symptoms? Depression is an illness that can be effectively treated.

Understanding Depression

EVERYONE GETS DOWN IN THE

DUMPS FROM TIME TO TIME. But you may suffer from clinical depression if a feeling of sadness or loss of interest in life and friends lingers for two weeks or more.

A combination of factors causes depression. Some cases are triggered by a stressful experience, such as the death of a spouse or loss of a job. Some illnesses, such as cancer, also can cause depression, as can alcohol and drug abuse.

Signs of Depression

A person who's depressed will have at least three or more of these symptoms every day, all day, for at least two weeks:

- Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities.
- Feeling sad, blue or down in the dumps.
- Fatigue and lack of energy.
- Sleep problems, including waking up early in the morning.
- Change in eating habits that results in weight loss or gain.
- Being anxious, pessimistic or worried.
- Feeling guilty, helpless or worthless.
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or a suicide attempt.

Getting Help

Up to 80 percent of depressed people can be treated successfully. Most people receiving treatment for depression begin to feel better in two to four weeks.



Recognizing that you could be depressed is the first step toward feeling better.

The usual treatment involves an antidepressant medication and/or psychotherapy. If prescription medications are part of your treatment, take them as prescribed and don't stop taking them without consulting your doctor.

Self-Help Steps

Try these self-help steps in addition to taking medication or going to counseling:

- Exercise regularly. Walking, bicycling, jogging, dancing and doing other aerobic exercise can improve your mood.
- Don't abuse substances. Alcohol and illegal drugs are closely linked to depression. Their use can contribute to or worsen your condition.
- Talk to someone. Talking with a friend, family member or EAP about events and situations that are causing you stress can help you gain perspective.

in the know

Late-Breaking Health News

>> Not just for kids. Shots (immunizations) to help head off diseases aren't just for kids. Adults need to be safe from diseases, too.

A flu shot may help you avoid getting the flu. You won't get the flu from a flu shot.

A rubella (German measles) shot can help you avoid birth defects. You may need to get a rubella shot before you get pregnant. Ask your doctor.

A hepatitis B shot can help prevent liver infection. You may be at risk for hepatitis B if you answer yes to any of these questions:

- Do you work with blood or body fluids at your job?
- Have you had more than one sexual partner recently?
- Do you inject illegal drugs?
- Have you recently had a sexually transmitted disease?

A tetanus shot can help prevent lockjaw. This illness can be fatal. Adults should have this shot every 10 years. If you get a cut or wound, you may need to get a shot sooner.

Stay healthy by getting the shots you need. Ask your doctor if you need any shots.


>> Chicken pox vaccine can save lives. A chicken pox vaccine has been available since 1995, yet people who could have received the vaccine are dying from the disease. The vaccine is recommended for almost everyone over age 1 who may be susceptible to the infection, including adults who didn't have it as children. Chicken pox is especially hazardous for adults — about 55 percent of those who die from it are older than age 20.



>> MORE AGGRESSIVE TREATMENT OF CHOLESTEROL RECOMMENDED. The National Institutes of Health suggests new guidelines for high cholesterol (the desirable level is less than 200 mg/dl) that would effectively triple the number of Americans using prescribed cholesterol drugs. The new guidelines also encourage physicians to make an added effort to identify people at risk of high cholesterol by using a test called a lipoprotein profile as the first test for high cholesterol. The researchers also suggest Americans limit saturated fats to 7 percent of total calories and increase their intake of soluble fiber, contained in legumes (such as beans and peas), cereal grains, fruits and vegetables.

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SPECIAL REPORTS

- 540** How to Quit Smoking
- 541** Sensible Weight Loss
- 542** Lowering Your Cholesterol
- 543** Reducing Your Stress
- 544** Walking for Fitness
- 545** Workstation Comfort
- 546** Fixing an Aching Back
- 547** Start An Exercise Program
- 548** Controlling Allergies
- 549** Lowering Health-Care Costs
- 550** Living With Arthritis
- 551** Dealing With Headaches
- 552** High Blood Pressure

10 Steps to Good Child Care

IF YOU'RE CHOOSING A CHILD-CARE PROGRAM, experts at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children offer 10 recommendations:

1. Check whether the program has a state license. This is a must.
2. Visit the center. While you're there, check whether staff members appear to enjoy caring for the children and whether the children appear happy.
3. Ask to see a written discipline policy. Be certain that no physical punishment of any kind is ever used.
4. See whether the staff can easily view and supervise all children, whether they're inside or outside.
5. Look for the appropriate level of staff. The AAP says there should be one adult per three infants less than 24 months old, one adult per four children 25 to 30 months old, one adult per five children 31 to 35 months old, one adult per seven children 3 years old and one adult per eight children 4 and 5 years old.
6. Avoid programs that use television as a baby sitter.
7. Does the center's design protect children? Check locations of electrical outlets, watch for heavy or sharp objects, and be sure outdoor play areas use impact-absorbing material.
8. Be certain there is a designated diaper-changing station with a sink, separate from the rest of the center. Watch to see if staff members wash their hands after changing diapers.
9. Ask about the staff's training. Ask when the staff was last trained in first aid, and in prevention of injury and infection.
10. Ask for a brochure or list that explains all costs you might incur.

Math Phobia Is a Multiplying Problem

A lot of kids need help to divide and conquer

Is your daughter frustrated by fractions? Is your son puzzled by percentages? If so, count your family among the millions who may have math phobia — now listed as a learning disorder by the American Psychiatric Association.

Many of us think math phobia is more common among girls than boys. But a University of North Carolina study of test scores shows that it may strike both genders almost equally. The largest gender difference between boys and girls was late in high school, and that was only 1.5 percent.



MAKE IT ADD UP

What can parents do to help head off math phobia?

- **Teach your child that math isn't just a system of obscure skills they must master through drills and memorization. It's a way to make sense of relationships — between parts and wholes, shapes and sizes, or beginnings and endings. It helps us find patterns in the way the world works.**
- **Show children math's role in daily life. "Let them hear you figure out the time you need to leave to get to the movies on time," says educator Marilyn Burns, author of *Math: Facing an American Phobia*.**
- **Focus on grasping concepts. Educators say that's just as critical as finding the right answer. "Real math is messy," Ms. Burns says. "Anyone who works with budgeting, for example, is dealing with uncertainty and variability."**
- **Don't hand down a poor attitude toward math. It won't help to say, "I was never any good at math either." Instead, say, "Let's look at that together."**

your safety

Essential Eye Safety

THOUSANDS OF AMERICANS SUFFER EYE INJURIES EVERY YEAR. The following guidelines can help you protect yourself and your family.

Home Protection

Almost 110,000 Americans suffer eye injuries in home accidents every year. Potential hazards are posed by household cleaning products, power tools, fertilizers, weed killers, power yard equipment and chemicals.

To protect your eyes, wear plastic safety goggles when working in the house, yard or with power tools.

Sports Protection

Nearly 44,000 Americans suffer sports-related eye injuries every year. Most of these injuries occur while people are playing basketball, baseball and racket sports, but any sport with a ball or projectile is hazardous to the eyes.

To protect your eyes:

- Wear sports frames with features such as padded or rubber bridges.
- Wear helmets with face guards when playing football, ice hockey, roller hockey or other high-impact sports.



Child Protection

More than 160,000 U.S. children suffer eye injuries every year. To protect your children's eyes:

- Don't buy poorly designed toys with sharp, pointed or rough edges.
- Don't buy poorly constructed toys made of brittle materials that could shatter.
- Select toys appropriate to children's ages. Toddlers under age 2 shouldn't have toys with stick handles. Those under age 6 shouldn't play with darts, arrows, slingshots or other missile-throwing games or toys.

Source: American Optometric Association, St. Louis, MO.

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Ver. 1

Now's the time to fight osteoporosis, no matter what your current age. Because bone density drops after the mid-30s in both men and women, it's important everyone do weight-bearing exercise, such as walking, on a regular basis and eat more dairy products to boost their daily calcium and vitamin-D intakes.

VOD 275

University of Washington Health Sciences and Medical Affairs, Seattle.

Schedule any surgery you need for the early morning. Your doctor will be more alert and less hurried than late in the afternoon. Also, you won't have to worry about the doctor being delayed because of an earlier patient.

Debra Jalliman, M.D., clinical instructor of dermatology, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York, NY.

Adding four slices of pepperoni to your pizza adds 108 calories to your meal.

Men's Health, 33 E. Minor St., Emmaus, PA 18098, 10 times a year, \$20/yr.

One study found these three factors had the most influence on whether someone liked his or her aerobics class: the instructor's fitness level, the instructor's ability to communicate instructions, and liking other participants in the class. Less important were the instructor's enthusiasm and the time and place of the class.

Research at Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green.

The most productive people keep asking themselves, "What's the most valuable use of my time right now?" You should, too — and you should ask this question every hour. Whatever your answer, you should focus on that particular task.

Focal Point by Brian Tracy, Amacom, 2001, \$21.95.